

Executive Summary

Montana Education Profile at a Glance

Montanans want information that will help them better understand the quality of education being provided to the children of our state and communities. Each measure in this report represents a snapshot in time. However, when measures are combined and observed over time, a clearer picture emerges than any single measure could provide. The information can help identify strengths and weaknesses, and help target education resources to areas of need.

The measures found in this publication include the following information about Montana schools:

- *Montana Context:* Enrollment in Montana schools has been declining since 1996-97. First the elementary began to decline, and now the high school numbers are decreasing.
- *Indicator 1, Program Offerings and Courses:* The number of high school students taking a strong academic core of courses has declined over the past several years.
- *Indicator 2, Environment for Learning:* The number of students indicating they had been in a physical fight or carried a weapon to school has declined over the past several years.
- *Indicator 3, Student Achievement:* On several achievement measures, students continue to obtain the highest scores in science.
- *Indicator 4, School Success:* The overall high school completion rate for the class of 1999 was 82 percent. However, the completion rate for American Indian students was only 59 percent.
- *Indicator 5, Student Services and Activities:* More than 22 percent of high school girls are involved in extracurricular vocal music activities, and football attracts 26 percent of high school boys.
- *Indicator 6, School Finance:* Expenditures for instruction and services to students are nearly two-thirds of total expenditures. Those costs include the direct interactions between teachers, librarians, counselors, and students. The remaining one-third includes building and maintenance costs, student transportation, extracurricular activities, district and building administration, and other costs.
- *Indicator 7, School Staffing and Teacher Characteristics:* Although the number of teachers changed only slightly between 1996-97 and 1998-99, the number of special education and Title I teachers increased by 142, and elementary, business, and other vocational education teachers decreased by 136. The number of English, science, social studies, and mathematics teachers also declined, while the number of applied technology and computer education teachers increased.
- *Indicator 8, Student Involvement in Learning:* The average attendance rate for students declined slightly at both elementary and high school levels.

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- *Indicator 9, School Facilities:* The 1998-99 state subsidies for school facilities provided 9.6 percent of total debt service.
- *Indicator 10, Background Characteristics of Students:* The portions of students eligible to receive services for special education or the School Foods programs have increased since 1996-97.

The arrows indicate if a trend is up or down. Many trends show little change or may be only informational. Red arrows indicate positive changes.

Montana Context			
Enrollment	96-97	98-99	Trend
Public Schools	164,627	159,988	↓
Private Schools	8,648	8,672	↔
Home Schools	3,275	3,412	↑

Indicator 1: Program Offerings and Courses

Participation in largest programs for special services

Program

Special Education	93%	98%	↑
Title VI	92%	95%	↑
School Foods	65%	65%	↔
Title I	64%	65%	↑

Students taking core curriculum ACT

Montana	59%	56%	↓
National	59%	60%	↑

Indicator 2: Environment for Learning

Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

Activities on School Property

In physical fight	13.6%	12.7%	↓
Carried weapon	12.4%	9.2%	↓

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Indicator 3: Student Achievement

Montana statewide achievement test reporting

Percent of students scoring Proficient and

Advanced i.e. in stanines 5 through 9

Subject - Grade 4	National	Montana 1996-97	Montana 1998-99	Trend
Reading	60%	72%	72%	↔
Mathematics	60%	70%	72%	↑
Science	60%	77%	75%	↓
Social Studies	60%	74%	73%	↓
Language Arts	60%	70%	69%	↓
Subject - Grade 8				
Reading	60%	75%	75%	↔
Mathematics	60%	72%	74%	↑
Science	60%	78%	78%	↔
Social Studies	60%	77%	76%	↓
Language Arts	60%	72%	71%	↓
Subject - Grade 11				
Reading	60%	77%	75%	↓
Mathematics	60%	74%	78%	↑
Science	60%	81%	77%	↓
Social Studies	60%	77%	77%	↔
Language Arts	60%	71%	71%	↔

Indicator 4: School Success

Completion of high school - overall			
Percent of seniors graduating	93.6%	94.1%	↑
High school completion rates	NA	81.9%	↔
High school dropout rates	5.5%	4.2%	↓
Completion of high school - American Indian			
Percent of seniors graduating	90.0%	93.8%	↑
High school completion rates	NA	59.3%	↔
High school dropout rates	15.6%	10.6%	↓
Accreditation of schools			
Percent of schools with regular accreditation	91%	90%	↓

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	1996-97	1998-99	Trend
Indicator 5: Student Services and Activities			
Staff/student ratio			
Elementary guidance counselor	1 to 449	1 to 431	↓
High School guidance counselor	1 to 301	1 to 284	↓
Indicator 6: School Finance			
Expenditures			
Costs for instruction and services to students	63.7%	63.9%	↑
Indicator 7: School Staffing and teacher Characteristics			
Average student/teacher ratio (NCES)			
Montana	16.0	15.7	↓
National	17.1	16.5	↓
Indicator 8: Student Involvement in Learning			
Average attendance - percent present			
Elementary Districts	93.5%	94.4%	↑
High School Districts	91.3%	91.6%	↑
K-12 Districts	93.0%	93.9%	↑
Statewide	92.8%	93.6%	↑
Indicator 9: School Facilities			
Outstanding bonds for facilities			
State portion of debt service	7.0%	9.6%	↑
Indicator 10: Background Characteristics of Students			
Portion of students served in largest special needs program			
Free and reduced lunch	29.3%	30.7%	↑
Special education	11.3%	11.7%	↑